



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

Mission and vision of the Science and Technology Division

Vision:

- An authoritative and respected Commission leading locally and globally, in articulating Africa's priorities in education;
- Restored African dignity, expressed through the confidence of education policy makers in ensuring that partner programmes are aligned with African priorities as articulated by the AUC.
- An educated African population, with at least a secondary school certificate of education for both male and female, underpinned by a culture of critical thinking, entrepreneurship and innovation

Mission Statement:

To contribute towards revitalized, quality, relevant, harmonized education systems responsive to the needs of Africa, taking into account Africa's aspiration and capacity in terms of human and material resources; systems that produce Africans with appropriate attitudes, values, knowledge and skills to facilitate the attainment of the AU vision; systems that generate applied and new knowledge and contribute towards its harnessing for meeting Africa's challenges as well as placing Africa firmly within the core of the global knowledge economy

Mandates and Core Functions:

- Development and harmonization of education policies and programs on the continent, towards the achievement of the AU vision
- Spearhead the revitalization of education systems
- Develop and Manage Continental Education Management Information Systems linked to regional and national levels providing information for local and international users

- Organize meetings of the relevant Specialized Technical Committee and other political and professional bodies to ensure collective articulation of priorities, ownership and accountability

1. AFRICAN UNION SPACE STI INITIATIVES

The development of an African Space policy and Strategy by the Space Working Group (SWG) comprising ten Member States has progressed well. A draft Space policy has been developed and presented on different platforms including the AU Ministerial Conferences of S&T and Meteorology. In August 2014, the 4th meeting of the SWG was held in Cairo, Egypt, which incorporated inputs from other user sectors and AU policy organs into the draft African Space Policy; developed a draft strategy for the implementation of the policy; and deliberated on a governance structure. At this meeting, the SWG also incorporated inputs from the African Ministerial Conferences.

The draft space documents were presented during the World Space Week 2014 celebration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and during the African Association of the Remote Sensing of the Environment Conference 2014 in Johannesburg, South Africa. These events are part of the efforts of the Commission in consulting with stakeholders in the sector and ensuring that Africa will benefit from space science and related technologies for its socio-economic development.

2. THE GLOBAL MONITORING FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY (GMES) & AFRICA

The Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative is one of the programmes under the Earth Observation mission of the African Space Programme under development. This programme seeks to establish long term capacity development and partnership between the two unions: the African Union and the European Union. The aim is to provide sustainable, reliable and timely services to the public and public policy makers in environmental and security matters. GMES & Africa is an extension of the European Copernicus programme to Africa. It was launched in Lisbon, Portugal, on December 7th, 2007 during the 2nd EU - Africa Summit, in response to the Maputo Declaration signed in October 2006, calling for an extension of the European GMES initiative to ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries. GMES & Africa aims to set-up an overall framework in Africa for Earth Observation (EO) applications which goal is to support national and regional policies through the systematic exploitation of Earth Observation data, technologies and services. It is one of the two space-focused priority projects for Africa, identified in the Book of Lighthouse

Projects, ready for implementation. Cross-cutting and technical thematic areas have been identified and agreed on at the expert level. The GMES and Africa initiative has been integrated into the First Action Plan of the EU-Africa Joint Strategic Partnership.

The main objective of the Action Plan is to allow Africa to make full use of the potential of space systems for sustainable development and reinforce the continent's capacity in and ownership of using and contributing to remote sensing applications. The Action Plan identified nine priority thematic areas:

(1) Long term management of natural resources

(2) Marine and coastal management

(3) Water resource management

(4) Climate variability and change

(5) Disaster risk reduction

(6) Food security and rural development

(7) Infrastructure and territorial development

(8) Conflicts resolution

(9) Health and five cross-cutting sectors namely: policy and institutional framework, infrastructure framework, capacity building, financial issues, and monitoring and evaluation. The 4th Africa-EU Summit (Brussels 2014) agreed to focus on three of the thematic chapters: long term management of natural resources (LTMNR), marine and coastal management (M&CR), and water resource management (WMR). The decision took into consideration the recommendation of the GMES & Africa Coordination Team composed of stakeholders from relevant EU and African States and institutions.

GMES and Africa will make use in particular of the technology offered by the European Copernicus programme. The Sentinel satellites programme should satisfy part of the EO data needs in Africa. Four Copernicus services are disseminating free-of-charge data of high interest for Africa: i) Global Land Monitoring (operational) ii) Marine Monitoring (quasi operational) iii) Atmosphere Monitoring (quasi operational) and iv) Emergency Management (operational).

A Coordination Team meeting was held in Tunisia in December 2014. This was followed by the 6th Space Troika meeting in April 2015. The EU-Africa Space Troika meeting is a forum that was set up in 2011 bringing together representatives of the African Union Commission Departments and European Commission Directorates involved in space matters so as to advance cooperation in space, monitor the implementation of agreed

projects, enable Africa to exploit its space resources and coordinate synergies amongst space initiatives in the continent so that space systematically contributes to Africa's sustainable development efforts. The 6th Space Troika reiterated commitment to deploying all efforts to finalize the remaining six chapters of GMES and Africa so as to realize the full evolution of the programme in order for Africa to develop local capacities (institutional, human and technical) for access to and exploitation of Earth Observation-based services for its sustainable development. It also adopted the GMES and Africa Road Map that included convening a stakeholders' workshop to launch the implementation process for the first three thematic areas under the Pan African Programme.

3. AFRICAN UNION RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME

The quest for an innovative way to exploit and utilize Africa's existing scientific excellences, promote greater participation in and involvement of African scientists, researchers and institutions in implementing the Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) engineered the design of the African Union Research Grant programme (AURG). The CPA was developed by the Ministers of Science and Technology (AMCOST) in 2005, to ensure Africa's comparative advantage and leverage her capacities to focus her research and development on responding to the continent's challenges and needs.

What is the African Research Grant?

The African Union Research grant programme is a direct and innovative way of implementing Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. This Programme was formulated as one of the lighthouse projects and has so far received financing through the Financing Agreement made between the EC and ACP Group of States under the 10th EDF Intra-ACP Envelop to launch two calls for proposals between 2010 and 2012.

Objectives

The programme aims to provide a framework for the African Union Commission to deploy and to improve science and technology research so that it contributes to Africa's poverty reduction, economic growth and social development efforts. Specifically, it aims to:

- Build the AU Commission's capacity to create a sustainable system of competitive research grants at Pan-African level and to put in place procedures and processes to manage such grants with the ambition to utilize the accumulated experience for the development of a fully-fledged African Framework Programme for research;

- Innovatively and build Africa’s sustainable research capacities through direct funding of the AU Science and Technology Policy, particularly the implementation of the Africa’s Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and its Lighthouse Projects; and
- Enhance intra-regional scientific collaboration and research that contributes to Africa’s sustainable development.

Outcome so far

To date, Contracts are awarded to 20 lead institutions (table 1) who received a grant ranging from €500,000 to €750,000 to do research in 46 locations in Africa, involving a network of 54 research institutions established between Africa and Europe.

Future outlook

A third call for proposals is expected to be launched soon with the European Union partners.

The African Union Commission also welcomes other partners to collaborate with it in future calls for proposals to implement thematic areas defined in the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024).

4. AU KWAME NKRUMAH SCIENTIFIC AWARDS PROGRAMME

In order for science and technology to flourish in Africa, the AU Commission has to initiate comprehensive and sustainable outreach activities to raise public awareness on the importance and relevance of science and technology for the continent’s sustainable development. The African Union Scientific Award programme was launched on African Union Day, of 9 September 2008, by H.E President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of the Republic of Tanzania. Its objective is to raise public awareness and understanding of the central role of science and technology in Africa’s socio-economic development. It was also in response to the January 2007 Heads of State and Government *declaration calling for 2007 to be the year for launching the building of constituencies and champions for science, technology and innovation in Africa*. In July 2010, the AU Assembly took a decision to rename this programme the “AUKwame Nkrumah Scientific Awards”. The programme awards scientific prizes to outstanding African scientists at the national, regional and continental levels.

The African Scientific Merit Awards focuses on two principles and broad scientific fields, namely:

- Earth and Life Sciences and,
- Science, Technology and Innovation.

Under this framework, the following awards will be allocated:

- The National Young Scientist Award
- The Regional Women Scientists Award

- The Continental African Scientist Award

Furthermore, the following actions will be implemented for raising the importance of S&T among the public and the media:

It is envisaged that these two actions will feed also the formulation and review of continental, regional and national policy and programmes in science and technology with a view to optimizing the utilization of infrastructure, as well as human, natural, and institutional resources.

Overall Goal:

To build public understanding and raising awareness of science and technology as an agent for social and economic progress in Africa, and for regional integration, via the African Scientific Merit Awards.

Objectives in detail:

The introduction of a **National** Young Scientist Award is designed to raise the profile of science and technology in AU Member States, targeting young emerging scientists and creating a competitive scientific culture.

The **Regional** Women Scientists Awards is designed to raise the profile of science and technology in AU Regional Economic Communities (RECs), targeting women scientists and thereby creating awareness of the role of women in science and technology.

The **Continental** African Scientist Awards is designed to raise the profile of science and technology in Africa and to create awareness and a competitive scientific culture.

National Young Scientist Award

Two National Young Scientist Awards, for each AU Member State in the field of Earth and Life Sciences, as well as Science, Technology and Innovation (one prize for each field).

- Two young emerging scientists / researchers of less than 40 years old will be awarded USD 5,000 as Merit at National Level for their scientific work.
- Each Member State will independently administer the award through their competent authorities. The AUC will disburse the funds and receive a report by each AU National Scientific Awards Competition Committee to be created in each AU State Member.
- (5000x2x54= 530.000 USD/Year)

Regional Women Scientists Awards

Awards in the field of Earth and Life Sciences and Science, Technology and Innovation (one prize for each field).

Excelling women scientists (without reference to age), whose work impact on the communities they live in, in the five regions will be awarded 20,000 USD (20,000 x 2 Candidates x 5 AU Regions= 200.000 USD per Year)

Continental African Scientist Awards

The Continental African Scientist Awards in the field of Earth and Life Sciences and Science, Technology and Innovation (one prize for each field).

This is an open award given to two top scientists at continental level (without reference to sex or age) in the two fields cited. Two candidates will be considered in this category, at a total cost of 200,000 USD per year.

5. AU SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION STRATEGY FOR AFRICA 2024 (STISA-2024)

On the Wings of Innovation, the AU Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) places science, technology and innovation at the epicentre of Africa's socio-economic development and growth.

The STISA-2024 has been developed during an important period when the African Union was formulating a broader and long-term AU Agenda 2063. The STISA-2024 is the first of the ten-year incremental phasing strategies to respond to the demand for science, technology and innovation to impact across critical sectors such as agriculture, energy, environment, health, infrastructure development, mining, security and water, amongst others. The strategy is firmly anchored on six distinct priority areas that contribute to the achievement of the AU Vision: **Eradication of Hunger and Achieving Food Security; Prevention and Control of Diseases; Communication (Physical and Intellectual Mobility); Protection of our Space; Living Together and Building the Society; and Wealth Creation.**

The strategy further defines four mutually reinforcing pillars which are prerequisites for its success: **building and/or upgrading research infrastructures; enhancing professional and technical competencies; promoting entrepreneurship and innovation; and providing an enabling environment for STI development in the African continent.** Continental, regional and national programmes will be designed, implemented and synchronized to ensure that their strategic orientations and pillars are mutually reinforcing, and achieve the envisaged developmental impact as effectively as possible.

The implementation of STISA-2024 will take place at three levels. At national level, Member States should incorporate this strategy into their National Development Plans. At regional level, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional research institutions, networks and partners should leverage the strategy in designing and coordinating initiatives. At continental level, the African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD Agency and their partners should advocate and create awareness, mobilize necessary institutional, human and financial resources, track progress and monitor implementation.

Continental, regional and national targets and indicators will be defined to facilitate comparability of data and regular Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the programmes. AOSTI, ASRIC and NEPAD Agency shall put in place a harmonised mechanism that will support Member States and RECs to collect standardised data and report on performance periodically. The analysis of data, annual reports and regular progress reviews will constitute an important management tool of the entire system.

While there are conventional mechanisms for funding Research and Development (R&D) and Innovation, it is essential to establish efficient, effective and coordinated financing mechanisms to implement the strategy. The AUC and NEPAD Agency shall mobilize and coordinate resources for technical support in developing and implementing national and regional plans and priority programmes. AU Member States and RECs will take a lead role in mobilizing public, private and donor resources for the coordinated implementation of national and regional programmes.

6. EU-AFRICA COOPERATION IN STI

The EU-Africa High-Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on science, technology and innovation (STI) between the EU and Africa is a key milestone in the implementation of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. Endorsed by the 3rd EU-Africa Joint Summit in Tripoli in November 2010, and launched in October 2011, the HLPD was established to enhance STI policy dialogue within the framework of cooperation on science and technology of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.

From 2013, the HLPD bureau has met more than 15 times, most of which are through video conference. In November 2013, the Bureau organized the 2nd dialogue that was hosted by the European Commission and focused on the role of science, technology and innovation in ensuring “Food, security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (including water)”, taking into account the cross-cutting issues such as innovation/entrepreneurship, research infrastructures and technical competence building. The outcome of the dialogue included conclusions and a way forward and a clear statement that the HLPD will henceforth, determine the priority themes for

collaboration in STI within the Africa-EU partnership. These outputs were tabled to the Africa-EU Summit in April 2014.

The bureau also revised its TOR to include new members and decided to create an expert working group to draft the roadmap for short, medium and long-term steps and milestones towards the joint implementation of a research and innovation partnership (flagship) between the EU and Africa, in the first priority area of cooperation, “food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture”. To this end, current members of the bureau from the African side are: Burkina Faso, Congo, Nigeria, Burundi, Namibia, Algeria and South Africa. Experts were selected from both Europe and Africa, supported by members of the Bureau to draft the roadmap for the EU-Africa partnership on research and innovation, with an initial focus on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture, including water. The team met from 6-8 October 2014, in Addis Ababa, to advance the finalization of the document.

7. SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND RESEARCH COMMISSION (STRC)

African Union Science and Technology Framework for detection, Identification and monitoring of Infectious Diseases of Humans, Animals and Plants in Africa

The AUNIDS endorsed by decision EX.CL/Dec.746(XXII) was developed with a key component, which is the African Union Network of Infectious Diseases Surveillance (AUNIDS). The AUNIDS is a virtual instrument to support the implementation of the African Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (ACDCP). The current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak has demonstrated once more the need for the existence of such a Network.

The establishment of the AUNIDS is currently underway despite the serious funding challenges facing the STRC. The STRC received a positive response from Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana and Mali. These Member States were able to nominate their NatCIDS and a draft legal agreement was sent out for final clearance by the AU Legal Counsel.

On the other hand, consultations with RECs are ongoing to identify their Regional centers. The East African Community (EAC) nominated the Integrated Disease Surveillance Network as the regional hub (RCIDS) for the AUNIDS which was endorsed by the ECA Council of Ministers in October, 2014. Furthermore, the ECA Ministers concluded their meeting by calling upon Member States (5 Member States) to nominate their NatCIDS and to communicate to the STRC as soon as possible, for the functionalization of the AUNIDS.

The STRC has identified and partnered with one African collaborative Network (Southern African Centre for Infectious Diseases Surveillance, SACIDS) and one European partner network (Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance on the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak). This led to a workshop on lessons learned from past Ebola outbreaks to inform current risk management. The main outcome is the ongoing development of the Intensified Preparedness Programme (IPP) on building capacity in communication and community work to better manage the Ebola outbreak initiative, with the following activities:

- Capacity building training of trainers in affected and not yet affected countries;
- Provision of online material to learn about this capacity building approach; and
- Executive briefings to advise risk management and risk communication.

This positive evolution will give the way to the next step of the implementation, the launching of the AUNIDS with readily designated national centers and collaborative and partner networks.

African Union Network of Sciences (AUNS)

The African Union Network of Sciences is a virtual network that involves a wide range of individuals/institutions working together to address Africa's scientific and technological development challenges. It is a platform where African Scientists, Engineers, Innovators, Inventors and Technology Developers will be able to interact, cooperate, exchange information/knowledge and complement one another in research and academic work. The implementation of the project is in four phases:

- Phase one: A survey carried out by the STRC on the existing scientific network shows over 163 networks are managed by individuals or small groups of people with challenges of popularization, updating information, and funding, among others. The STRC obtained the database of members of different networks and institutions and assembled over 2000 databases. Presently, however, the STRC is making follow ups, for some African Universities and research institution to furnish the network with their databases. This activity is a continuous process throughout the life span of the project. The TWAS offers support and partnership to the STRC in the development of the AUNS project and graciously unveiled its database to the STRC, while The African Academy of Sciences (AAS) has applauded and welcomed the project and provided the AUNS with the database of its fellows.
- Phase two: The Network's E-portal, modules, data base and digital library are in design stage where currently, the consultation between the STRC and the Management Information Service (MIS) Division has resulted to the decision that it is economical to out-source the hosting while a back-up should be maintained by the STRC. In September 2014, a working session was held in Egypt between the STRC and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (library of Alexandria) that resulted in the latter offering partnership to assist in the design, construction and hosting of the network portal.

- Phase three: Functionalization and publicity of the network.
- Phase four: Continuous improvement and sustainability of the network.

The project is a continuing one and is yet to reach the third and fourth phases of the project.

Second Edition of the African Pharmacopeia

The first edition of the African Pharmacopeia book was published in 1985 and since then, there has been progress in the field technically and scientifically, and in other continents' pharmacopeia. The STRC was able to finalize the 2nd edition of the African Pharmacopeia with updated data on the plants identified under the 1st addition. 100 plant species have been added to the book along with a photo gallery.

Pan African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO)

Following the Assembly decision AU/Dec. 138 (VII) on the need to establish the Pan African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO), the Statute establishing the PAIPO was developed and reviewed in wider consultation with Member States, ARIPO, OAPI, WIPO and presented for final endorsement to the last Assembly of Heads of State and Government which had considered the document and recommended further deliberation on it by the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs. It is anticipated that the latter will consider the legal document for final adoption.

8. AFRICAN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL (ASRIC)

The African Union Commission (AUC) has been mandated to promote scientific research and innovation, and address the challenges to Africa's socio-economic development through the establishment of an African Research Council, which gave rise to the African Scientific Technical and Research Innovation Council (ASRIC). ASRIC is a decision of the Assembly of African Union Heads of State and Government. It came into effect after its endorsement by the Extraordinary Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST V), held in Brazzaville, the Republic of Congo, in April 2014. The AU Assembly, taking note of this decision, and the Executive Council Decision (EX.CL/Dec.747 (XXII)) on African Research and Innovation Council, requested the Commission to begin the necessary processes for the establishment of ASRIC. It also called on Member States and Developing Partners to avail the necessary technical and financial support for sustaining ASRIC.

With the establishment of ASRIC, the continent will be endowed with a pan-African institution that could serve as a voice for the African research community in the international arena. It will support knowledge production across various fields of science by formulating research projects and programs that will promote collaborative work among researchers. ASRIC will bring together the scientific community, funding agencies, the private sector, Civil Society and other stakeholders. It will work on the mobilization of resources and harnessing of scientific research and technology as a means to achieving the AU's development plans, objectives, and aspirations.

Following the adoption of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024) by the AU Heads of State and Government in June 2014, ASRIC will be playing an instrumental role in the implementation of this continental strategy. STISA-2024 is part of the long-term, people-centered development programme of the AU Agenda 2063. The strategy fosters social transformation and economic competitiveness, through human capital development, innovation, value addition, industrialization and entrepreneurship. It is the first of the ten-year incremental phasing strategies to respond to the demand for science, technology and innovation across various socio-economic sectors.

9. AFRICAN OBSERVATORY FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (AOSTI)

The vision for the Observatory is to be a continental repository for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) statistics and a source of policy analysis in support of evidence-based policy making in Africa.

The mission of the Observatory is to champion evidence-based science, technology and innovation policy-making by backstopping African countries to manage and use statistical information in accordance with the African Charter of Statistics.

Objectives:

1. Enable African countries to discover their STI capabilities and direct such capabilities to solve pressing economic, social, environmental and other development challenges;
2. Strengthen national capacities for STI policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and review;
3. Improve the quality and dynamism of African NISs and related STI policies;

4. Provide to African decision-makers up-to-date information on global scientific and technological trends, in order to enable them to effectively engage in policy-making on STI issues;
5. Strengthen national capacities for technology prospecting, acquisition or procurement; and
6. Reinforce regional and international STI cooperation.

10. THE AFRICAN UNION BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM

Among the key goals of the African Union (AU) is to promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people. What is more, encouraging international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, establishing the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations, all form part of the objectives of the organization. The development of the continent will be further advanced by promoting research in all fields, in particular science and technology. This has been asserted in the constitutive acts of the AU itself¹.

Taking cognizance of this mandate, the African Union Commission (AUC), through the Department of Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ), had been implementing a capacity building Project for an Africa-wide biosafety system from March 2006 to December 2010.

The outcomes of this Project have been quiet successful in equipping the AU with the necessary instruments to support its Member States in implementing their obligations under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Among these are key instruments such as the African Strategy on Biosafety and the Revised African Model Law on Biosafety. The instruments also enable the development and publication of select technical biosafety issue papers, supporting the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety and the liability and redress negotiations in the international negotiating arena, as well as various international and regional cooperation agreements on biosafety that were achieved in the course of the Project. The Department has hence retained activities on biosafety within its portfolio. The activities of the Department on matters of biosafety are based on the following six Pillars of the African Strategy on Biosafety:

- Pillar 1: Capacity Building and Preparedness for Negotiations
- Pillar 2: Awareness Raising and Biosafety Information Exchange
- Pillar 3: Establishment and Strengthening of Institutional Frameworks
- Pillar 4: Policy and Legal Frameworks

¹ Articles 3(d), (e), (i) and (m)

- Pillar 5: International Cooperation
- Pillar 6: Sustainability Mechanism

Biodiversity among the priorities of the African Union

Member States have increasingly been calling upon the AU to continue playing a central role in coordinating biosafety at the Continental level as well as actively engage in the broader issues of the CBD from which the Biosafety Protocol has emerged..

What is more, for Africa, biodiversity is the basis for essential environmental services upon which life on earth depends. Africa is endowed with both variety and abundance of living species, ranging from inland to coastal and marine biodiversity. However, the opportunities and challenges associated with biodiversity typically apply over large geographical extents in Africa. The impact of climate change has inspired actions at many levels; however such actions have not been on a scale sufficient to address the pressures on biodiversity. There has been insufficient integration of biodiversity issues into the broader policies, strategies, programs and actions – hence underlying drivers of biodiversity loss have not been reduced. It is against this back drop that the Department of HRST is taking biodiversity as one of its areas of focus between 2013 and 2017. Establishing clear linkages between biodiversity, natural resource management and ecosystem services is a critical component of good governance which value unfortunately is still not reflected in broader policies and structures.

11.ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING OF GENETIC RESOURCES (ABS), THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY 2011-2020, AND THE AICHI TARGETS

Recognizing the need to incorporate biodiversity in Africa’s development agenda, and based on the outcomes of the Tenth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 10), the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union passed a decision to include biodiversity among its priorities. The Assembly also called on the Member States to become Parties to the CBD and all its Protocols. Furthermore, the Commission was called upon to implement progress in the implementation of this decision on a regular basis². Another call for action was made in September 2012 by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), for the establishment of an African coordination mechanism for negotiations on the CBD and its Protocols.

² Doc. Assembly/AU/15 (XVI) Add.3

In an effort to implement these decisions, the HRST had developed the AU Guidelines for the Coordinated Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS. The 15th Session of AMCEN adopted the draft AU Guidelines and a recommendation for adoption by the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly was endorsed. The AU Guidelines contain a 'Strategic Framework' that intend to give policy direction to Member States and 'Technical Guidelines' that elaborate step-by-step actions to be taken by the relevant players in ABS implementation in Africa.

Key action areas

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (adopted by COP 10) is a framework that is relevant for all biodiversity related Conventions and will also go a long way to promoting synergies in the African context. Therefore, the following are key action areas that activities in the biodiversity program seek to advance, taking into account the existing work under the Department of HRST and the need for follow up to sustain the outcomes:

1. Coordinated support to Member States in the development of national and regional biodiversity targets (vis-à-vis) the global target within the framework of the January 2013 Summit decision and focusing on biodiversity for poverty alleviation;
2. Support the promotion and generation of scientific information, as well as the development of methodologies and initiatives to monitor status and trends of African biodiversity and ecosystem services;
3. Support the African Group of Negotiators on Biodiversity to hold Pre-COP meetings and coordinate African Common Positions
4. Coordinate efforts under the Scientific Technical and Research Commission to establish a framework for documenting and protecting African indigenous knowledge on genetic resources vis-à-vis the implementation of the Strategic Plan on biodiversity and the protection of local and indigenous communities;
5. Synergize the AU Biodiversity Program with other related African programs and streamline biodiversity in other regional instruments relevant to the implementation of the CBD and its Protocols (the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Nagoya Protocol on ABS, The Nagoya Kuala-Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress regarding damages resulting from Living Modified Organisms);
6. Coordinate the interfaces between the implementation of the CBD and other related international and regional instruments related to the CBD such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources Food and Agriculture, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Pan African Intellectual Property Organization, the Trade related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, the Swakopmund Protocol, etc.
7. Support Member States in genetic resources valorisation and mainstreaming into national development policies and plans through the development of a

continental biodiversity strategy, a continental framework on natural resource accounting, and the management of biodiversity.